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# TEACHING READING THROUGH KNOW-WANT-LEARNED (KWL) STRATEGY: The effects and benefits

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to chart out the effects of teaching reading using Know-Want-Learned (KWL) strategy of Blachowicz and Ogle. This study employed quantitative method by having one pre-test and posttest research design, conducted at SMPN 2 Kejuruan Muda, Aceh Tamiang District, with a total sample of 26 students. The test was analyzed by using t-test. The study revealed that there was an improvement from the pre-test to the posttest and that the teacher had implemented KWL strategy accordingly so that the students improved their reading comprehension skill. In addition, KWL is one of the basic strategies developed to know the extent of learners' ability and the way they commit it on their own. Thus, the strategy itself has an effect to trigger the students to be autonomous learners. However, it is suggested that the teachers modify some steps in the KWL procedures to eventually motivate the students in learning reading.

**Keywords:** *reading; effects; benefits; KWL strategy*

## INTRODUCTION

Commonly, students' difficulty in reading comprehension mostly lies on the students' weakness to grasp information from a text. The students usually only read the text word by word without understanding the meaning. A skilled reader, however, not only focuses on each word of the text but also its meaning (Zare & Othman, 2013) since the main purpose of reading is to sharpen the understanding (Youniss, 2013). Many students are good in reading but when asked about the summary of the text, they fail to do so. In other words, comprehension refers to a readers' capability to fully know what they have read. West and Chew (2014) reaffirm that people who love reading become a good reader, which leads them to have more chance to success in the education field and others. Conversely, people who dislike reading will fail to acquire a habit of literacy, causing a difficulty in sharpening the skills and chance to success in the education field. Teachers carry on the important task to help learners develop ways to engage actively with both of the author and the text and to think about the content. KWL is one of the basic strategies developed to guide the learners' reading ability and the way they commit it on their own.

Assessment of reading comprehension (Klingner, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007) is full of challenges due to the problem in determining how far a student actually know and think. There are two forms of reading assessment. The first is to investigate how well a student is reading while the second is to evaluate how much improvement the student has made (Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt, & Kamil, 2003). Both forms of assessments are necessary in order to achieve effective reading instruction. The assessment for beginners is usually conducted by checking out the student's reading aloud. In this way, the teacher assesses the student's fluency and word recognition. Beyond this level, assessment concerns on text comprehension.

Assessment occupies the crucial position to analyze the students' ability and also to evaluate their potential in learning. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) mention that a test has several objectives including to diagnose the students' strengths, weaknesses, and difficulties; to assess the students' achievement; to assess the students' aptitude and potential; and to analyze the students' readiness for a

plan. In this present study, the test aimed to assess the students' reading ability, which was administered in a multiple-choice format.

There are many different techniques for developing reading comprehension. Reading comprehension depends upon the readers' ability to connect prior knowledge with the text. This concept is strengthened by Klingner et al. (2007) that reading comprehension is a number of complicated process which causes the feedback interaction between readers and the text, which is between readers' experiences and background knowledge towards thoughts or ideas which the author implied until reaching a boundary of understanding. As stated by Blachowicz and Ogle (2008), KWL is an activity in which the teacher leads active readers to engage with reading texts. The activity processes any information and knowledge that the students possess in order to help their friends in a group to establish a good learning condition and to communicate the results of their reading. In other words, this strategy stimulates the students to activate their prior knowledge when reading. They also become active readers who analyze texts in three steps, starting with K table (what they know), then W table (what they want to learn more), and end with L table (what they have learned). Thus, to promote reading comprehending, this study tried to implement Know, Want to Know, Learned (KWL) strategy to further the students' reading ability. The question posed in the study was: "How does KWL strategy improve the students' reading comprehension?"

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed the experimental research with one pre-test and post-test design (Creswell, 2008), conducted at SMPN (public junior high school) 2 Kejuruan Muda, Aceh Tamiang District. The population was the second year students of SMPN 2 Kejuruan Muda consisting of 180 students from six classes. The sample was one second-year class of 26 students, taken by the random sampling technique. The alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) of the study was: "There is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores after applying KWL strategy in reading comprehension." The hypothesis was tested by using t-test formula.

The instrument of data collection was a reading test comprised 20 multiple choice items, for pre-test and posttest. The reading material used was a descriptive text. Pre-test was administered to figure out the background of the students' ability in reading comprehension before applying the KWL strategy. After the pre-test, the descriptive text was taught to the students by practicing the steps of Know, Want, and Learned (KWL) Strategy. The social functions of a descriptive text were explained to the students in order to allow the students to understand the usefulness of the descriptive text in daily life. Afterwards, the structure of the text was also introduced so that the students had a clear idea about identification and description.

During the experiment, the students were also taught to deal with language features of the descriptive text, such as using present tense, focusing on specific participants, and using adjectives and verbs. In the last meeting, they were given an example of the descriptive text with some simple questions based on the text. They were asked to understand the meaning of the text given and to distinguish between paragraph of identification and paragraph of description. In addition, they were asked to directly mention the adjectives, adverbs, and sentences of simple present tense.

After the students had been taught with the descriptive text, they learned about the KWL worksheet and how to use it in the reading activity. The step Know (K) refers to *what students know about topic*, which was done before the students began to read. In this step, the students wrote down the words or phrases that they already knew related to the topic. The more things they knew, the better chance for them to comprehend the content of the text given. Next, the step Want (W) means *what students want to learn more about the topic*. In this step, the students made a list of questions about what they expected to learn in the topic during the reading activity. If they were curious about something related to the topic, they were supposed to write down the question. Here, the students were engaged in critical thinking on the text material that they had. By thinking critically, many questions could emerge in their minds. The last step Learned (L) indicates *what students have learned*. In this step, they paraphrased the important information, such as surprising

or interesting ideas obtained from the text (Wiesendanger, 2001). Then, they checked the ideas against those in the W column. The L step occurred after the students had finished their reading. They practiced the KWL strategy for three meetings. The post-test was provided at the end of the experiment, aimed to measure the students' ability in reading comprehension after the use of KWL strategy.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the pre-test are illustrated in the following chart.

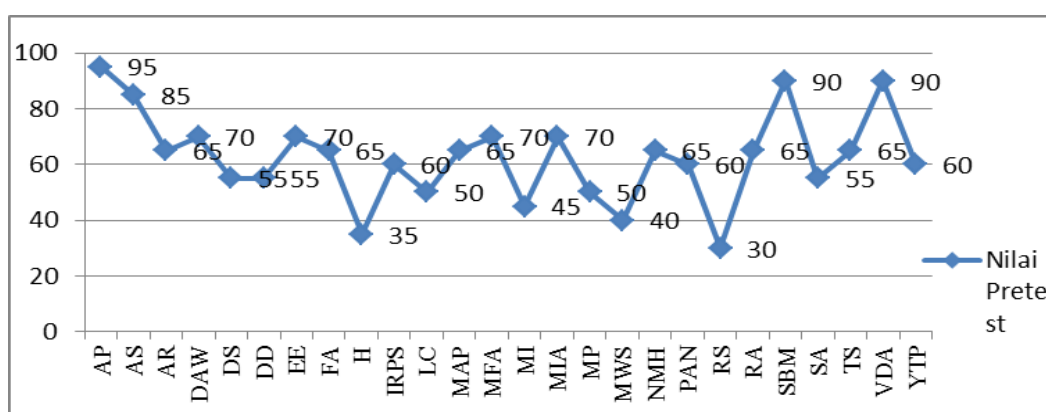


Chart 1. Students' Pre-test Scores

Chart 1 above shows that the students' pretest score before the treatment ranged from 30 to 95. It can be seen that the highest score was 95 while the lowest score was 30. Out of 26 students, only four students passed the minimum completion criteria (KKM) of 72, whereas the majority had lower scores.

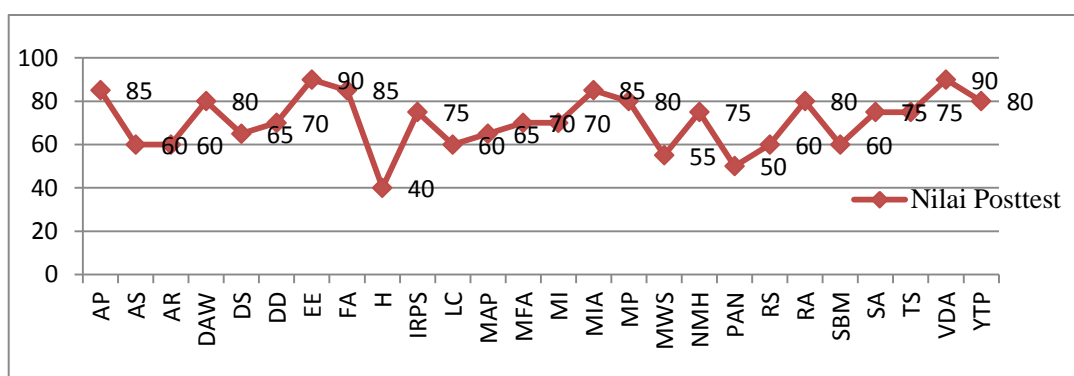


Chart 2. Students' Post-test Scores

Chart 2 depicts the students scores in posttest after the treatment, ranging from 40 to 90. In this test, the highest score was 90 while the lowest score was 40. Here, the number of students who passed KKM score increased considerably to 13 students.

The following table 1 below was the results of hypothesis testing. It was found that sig. (2- tailed) was lower than the significance level (0.05), which was  $0.010 < 0.05$ . Hence,  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted, indicating that the application of the KWL strategy was effective in increasing the students' achievement in reading comprehension skill.

Table 1. Statistic results of hypothesis testing

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pre-test - Post-test	-8.26923	15.02946	2.94752	-14.33976	-2.19870	-2.805	25	.010

The result of the analysis affirmed that the KWL (Know, Want, and Learned) strategy is one of the appropriate ways that helps students who has a weakness in comprehending the reading materials, making the students be able to discover the main ideas, surprising ideas, and interesting/important information after the reading activity has been done (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008). In general, this strategy assists the students to become more effective readers of certain texts, i.e. expository, descriptive, and narrative texts (Fengjuan, 2010). Moreover, it also helps the teachers to be more interactive in their teaching class (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008). Corner (2006) as cited in Fengjuan (2010) also adds that the KWL strategy guides the learners to set a specific aim for reading and write down what they learned.

As stated by Blachowicz and Ogle (2008), the process in the KWL reading activity allows for reading engagement for the readers. Thus, this strategy can

stimulate the students to activate their prior knowledge when reading, starting from finding out what they *Know*, followed by understanding what they *Want* to learn further, and ended by identifying what they have *Learned*.

The finding here also confirmed that the KWL is reading strategy which tends to sharpen students' prior knowledge about information which they are ever had and interpret them based on their own experience (Wiesendanger, 2001). Thus, it is suitable for the students in the intermediate level to use it for seeking the detail information in the texts. In short, the students' success in increasing their acquisition in reading comprehension was greatly affected by the implementation of the KWL strategy as proven by the students' posttest scores.

## CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

In general, the study concludes that the KWL strategy could increase the students' reading ability. The strategy could be properly applied in reading class skill since it helped the teachers to engage students in a group work. However, it is suggested that the teachers choose topics suitable for their lesson material so that the KWL strategy can work properly, allowing the students to discuss about familiar issues. The teachers should avoid giving topics without prescreening and checking the background of knowledge of the students because the KWL strategy involves activating the students' prior knowledge on a given topic.

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